

Statement of
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for the House Committee on Oversight and Reform
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Thank you, Chairwoman Maloney, for inviting me to testify before the Committee on Oversight and Reform regarding the July 21, 2020, Memorandum for the Secretary of Commerce on *Excluding Illegal Aliens from the Apportionment Base Following the 2020 Census*.

I became director of the Census Bureau in 2009, after a research career devoted to survey methodology and 8 years as Director of the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan. I directed the Bureau through the conduct of the 2010 decennial census. I am very proud of the dedication and expertise of the Census Bureau staff in conducting one of the strongest censuses, doing so on time, and returning \$1.7 billion to the Treasury because of their efficient work. I am now the provost at Georgetown University. I speak to the committee with that background in mind.

Since 1790, each US decennial census has sought to enumerate all residents in the country. Some of the first words in the US constitution seem to illuminate the intent of the founding fathers on this score. Before the decennial census mandate is laid out in Article 1, Section 2, the prior Section 1 notes the qualifications of membership in the House of Representatives: “No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and **been seven Years a Citizen of the United States**, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.” Note the explicit designation of citizenship for qualifications of members of the House. In the very next section, Section 2, outlining the decennial census, the word “citizen” is not used either in referring to the census or to the apportionment of the House of Representatives. Instead, the phrase “whole... persons” is used. This goal, a complete enumeration of all persons resident in the country has been the basis of all censuses since 1790. It has been the basis of reapportionment decade after

decade. Indeed, the decennial census is the only event in the country in which all persons participate.

I am not a lawyer and thus will not comment on the legal basis of the recent memorandum from the administration.

I instead will comment on critical needs of the Census Bureau going forward, with an eye toward quality assurance and transparency.

I have four points to convey:

- 1. The Census Bureau technical staff must be freed to complete the 2020 census at the maximum level of quality possible within the unprecedented constraints of the pandemic.**

The technical staff at Census Bureau has requested a delay in the delivery of various products of the 2020 Census. This request flows from the delay in the conduct of the various stages of the data collection following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This delay no doubt saved lives of the thousands of enumerators whose public service will make these efforts successful. I applaud the technical staff of the Census Bureau in making this decision. The decision, however, forces a delay of delivery of 2020 products. I support this delay and urge Congress to authorize it.

- 2. All of us need to convey the message again, very clearly, that the 2020 census must enumerate all persons resident in the US.**

Regardless of the outcome of the administration's memorandum on undocumented persons, the decennial census has the goal of enumerating all persons in the United States. We must double-down on that message as the country enters the nonresponse followup stage. There are many other uses of the decennial census. These uses need a complete enumeration of all persons. No other message to the American public should be delivered. Any other message can exacerbate the fears of some groups that the Census can be used to harm them, despite the fact that it can benefit us all.

- 3. The Census Bureau should release all quality indicators of the measurement of citizens required under the July 11, 2019, Executive Order.**

Rarely in the conduct of censuses throughout the world is the responsible agency asked to produce official estimates critical to the economy or the society without prior testing. The attempt to assemble from administrative record systems and other sources counts of citizens at small geographical areas as official statistics is a task unprecedented in

the history of the Bureau. With unprecedented efforts within a statistical agency serving the country comes the obligation to inform the country of the strengths and weaknesses of the product of those efforts.

I urge Congress to assure that evaluations of the accuracy of such statistics be presented along with the estimates themselves, open to review by the statistical community.

4. The credibility of the 2020 census can be achieved only by wide dissemination of quality indicators of the data.

I urge the Census Bureau, given the unique nature of the census data collection, to publish intermediate indicators of quality of the 2020 Census in a continuous stream as they become available. These would include process indicators (like initial response rates, but also proxy reporting rates, item missing data rates, percentages of persons with usable data), comparisons with population estimates from demographic analysis, in comparable tabular form, and initial field data from the post enumeration survey (for example, match rates of households).

Credibility requires transparency. The sooner the country can see multiple indicators of 2020 census quality, the sooner the use case for the census can be made.

In conclusion, I am pleased to submit this written testimony and look forward to testifying before the Committee.